THE OTHER CENTURY

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The OTHER CENTURY

from an abandoned film

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MMXXVI

THE STUDENT

Life went on. Grift and acid, fluorescent light and cockroaches. Insurrection was in the air. The film director who'd helped with my court case called one day and asked me to meet him. I did. He asked if I'd like to assist him on his new production. I'd get an office as part of the deal, he said. I considered this. Then he asked me how I felt about geometry, about the torus. He asked me about electromagnetism, about Los Angeles, and then he said something about a gun. It seems the last guy who'd held the position had blown his head off. I wasn't quite sure what the director had in mind. I said I would have to learn.

THE FIRST DAY

A cost in coming
sudden to the mind.

A calm in raiding
whoever else one is. Like

luck, then nothing.
Then chemicals soak

the psyche's furniture.
This arms race of eyes,

fishing for the Dog Star—
a cup for the broken lens.

MEETING THE SEER

She ate through certainty and credit,
the torsion of showy trust. Evening molars,
morning bone. Traffic like venom, like
electrons in her nervousness. A little bit
of caustic, a bare wrist in a vacant shop.

Some rugged leaflets, then the world
announced its face in a rain of static,
gauds stitched and birthed like petals
opening inside the eyes of citizens,
inside their suitcased heart, ticketed
and riding a cart through the aisles.

She loved them like that. She loved
their being this, the way it truncates
to find a twin to look with. Look.
She looks blind and feels the picture
reaching through her where it bends,
where lightning eats into the language.

A DIARY

It comes to a study in leaving. What exits is erased.

Maybe more likely if gone, or slipped. Maybe patient now

inside out. Like a shore surrounds. Like you yourself

surround, I myself. There is no other anywhere.

ALTERNATES (I)

Musidora
errorproof
sprawl

⋆

And we entered the last of the American cities

⋆

enforcer
phrasal
lesion
nasturtium
impalement
rut

⋆

"There are certain actors who are out of their minds
and so transient in their presence that they can
actually convince themselves and others of anything"

⋆

unprepared

THE HOTEL NEPTUNE

[Interior] Two beds. One perfectly made, adorned with a worn blue coverlet whose stitching makes loops and boxes. On the other, a black toroidal shape emits a noise of static. From the torus, several thin plastic tubes stretch to the arm of a woman where they are inserted via needle. A dozen or so wires loop from the cube to patch-electrodes scattered on her head and chest. On the night table between the two beds, a voice-activated sound recorder listens electronically for her voice. She is unconscious. Intermittently, she laughs and sobs. When she speaks, it arrives in voices not her own:

> *On air, filaments, silver beneath our sleep. The only house in Leah's eyes. A globe, a chair, passage through old rentals, old coronas, wefts (hold, pattern, repeat.) Deep below us, music, salve and alloy ("oh, I know you, sweet black dog"). Jeanne, this hearing as twinship: circumambient, slack with ruses. I see us waving, the horses moving through us, adore the frame. The gone blue city of Los Angeles. Golden again, besides...*

Just then, a teenage custodian opens the door. One look is all he needs—he picks up the phone.

BLUE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Above us,
the stars

shine like
tiny coffins

asking
telescopes

to eat their
childhood

ALTERNATES (II)

crystal
silver
emulsion:

fascicle
kenosis
key

⋆

as the fame of its disasters form her mind

⋆

chlorine
anneal
homing
shackle
strychnine
sky

⋆

"from the estate of Louis Daguerre"

"from the polaroids of the accused"

A DREAM OF MASKS

With no voice, no face

a tongue, no touch in fingers—

phased anthology incised with

any before the last one? Yeah, he

knows, the music shuttered pure

your vertical in greys (I'm tired

of all this too, so full of nobody!

Well, ask me to apologize

THREE PAGES OF AN ALBUM

THE VENUS OF CONFUSION

The document is compiled of accidents.
Mostly, it is her laughter, twisting freely

and running through our voyage. Somehow,
in her sleep, she tracks the century. Alone,

she builds a market for vanishings, zeroes,
and reads their stars (Hesperus, Phosphorus).

Beneath them, we carry tickets. We watch her
attracting pupils to the rigors of her dream.

AN AMERICAN SCEANRIO

In the long hours in detention, you wonder.
The team had led you through a dark tunnel
to the remains of imagination: a list etched

into a brittle manual, its edges stained by
thumbs of lifetimes (not so many, not so long ago).
This bunker is an old schoolroom. Here,

cobwebs of lust veil your eyes as you watch
old calendars spill out through spools of celluloid.
Class clowns collide with actresses, alien manipulations

of your heartbeat start to feel like surgery.
Everything becomes an alias of itself.
Each fantasy brings a satellite. A contract.

THE CUT OUT

They run the reel back
through all the parts and pasts

until they find you there

and freeze

VOICES NOT HER OWN

"I talk to them. If I'm in a weird, small town, making a movie, and I'm in a strange apartment, they come to me. They reveal each thing I say. Sometimes, I can't take it. I will say to them, "No, please, I can't do this. There must be someone, but it can't be me." Who knows what ghosts are, or dreams. But there are traces I can feel. With people too. People stain rooms all the time".

THE SOUTH NODE

The final actress is a medium.
When she arrives within my life,

she witnesses the end of everything:
a broken glass and then a voyage

into the bare rooms of my voice.
I stand inside her questioning.

Her fear becomes my signature,
my genre. Our minds undress

in sunlight, in the Lydian mode.
A name. Then the fading of a bell.

THE CRYSTAL WAVE

I am what flickers and collides, drifting along the manifold. Is that enough for you? It doesn't matter. Say some director asked you for a favor. Say someone put this machine in motion, wired it to the worn sad evidence of the century. Now what? The officers will use us in their exhibition. Their nanoparticles will pour through our torsos, and we will begin to recognize our secrets everywhere. On marquees, in the fine print of contracts, throughout the magazines of the famous and decayed. There will be no outside anymore, no inside. Without camera or projector—in a glamor of yellows, keys of grey—each signature becomes the sky.

ALTERNATES (III)

nodal
contusion
slake

⋆

noisome
enamor
lifted
striae
cryptid
clash

⋆

"I said the future is not your business."

⋆

Her bottle, filled with celluloid and light.
Her blue capsules leaking like cyanide.

⋆

[exposure]

TEENAGE PROJECTOR

No one even dies. You learn this.
You watch each fetish reverse

as the brand names bleed urine
and bile into a plastic heart replica.

Ghouls freeze inside us, poisoning
the valium. Lucifer is only a mask.

A MESSAGE

the hour is very late sincerely yours mr. fritz lang

THE DIRECTOR
(or, *THE OTHER CENTURY*)

1.

We are in this together. The dream of the lens
has led us to an abandoned treatment plant, a cold
and vacant warehouse. Shacks, trails. Underground.
Mines and secrets whisper in the grasses, telling
of nations, angelic invasions, the terror of inhaling
eternity's parasites. Just so, the children here
grow vast libraries of psychic error. We watch them
collecting strays, lapping the unknown medicine
from each hollow day. In a poultice they've wrapped
cesium, radium, a dust of cobalt. A strange fragrance
clings to each particle and we breathe new adolescence
through our scarves of grey paper. It tastes of wonder.

2.

The gifts of artifice. To summon, to cleave. To split
the heart open again in a chemical untouched by the camera.
I know nothing of the film we are, or the film we make.
But I've given it miracles, federations, a cache of vitamins
for the insane waif who dreams the fate of Presidents.
I've given the images that swarm like a tired population
in the concrete basement of my eyes, dim and waiting.
I wade through the old afternoons: a folding chair,
chalk letters on the sidewalk, furtive faces, haunts—
the last pulse of faith smothered in a contract.
As I approached the mouth of this century's desire,
it twisted in a river of broken tiles & shredded film.
Fishes billowed in its ink. I winced as I saw the decades
emerging from its wavering surfaces, leaking fantasies.
I piled them up in a blue, sodden heap—then called *cut.*

3.

I come home drenched in sepia. It is April, a Sunday.
7:37PM. You are here. The sun lingers long above
the pixelated trees, dictating the final edits to my life.
I read a page from a military encyclopedia, and as you listen,
you confuse each word with someone's singing. I try
but cannot hear it as you do. If there were time, I'd learn.
I'd feel everything drifting like pollen. The light in the curtains,
the moth-like softness. As the doctors speak to me, they say
the snow that fell in my throat has spread its radiation.
I will expire like the century, like my film I cannot be.
With you, I can shred another hour of rest, can watch till dawn.
Then I'm gone, to find the dog trapped in my dream.

THE BLUE TORUS

Life went on. Gifts and orchids, fluorescent light and old files. Insurrection was in the air. The actress who'd played The Seer called one day and told me: the project was at an end. The director had vanished. One look was all she needed (a passage through Leah's eyes). Then she asked if I'd come to meet her. She invited me to a weird small town, a strange apartment. When I arrived, she asked me how I felt about the faces in the street. She asked me about crystals of silver halide, and then she said something about the life span of the sun. Someone put this machine in motion. It comes to a study in leaving, capsules filled with celluloid and light (in Lydian mode, in April). I wasn't quite sure what she had in mind, and I said the future is not our business. She said I would have to learn.

CREDITS

An earlier draft of "Three Pages from an Album" appeared in *Noir Sauna* in 2025 under the title "The February Case." "Meeting the Seer" and "The South Node" are both forthcoming in *Nausea.* My thanks to the editors.

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Image opposite title page is of Musidora as Irma Vep in *Les Vampires* (1915). Image opposite "Credits" page is a decayed daguerreotype.

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In an elliptical way, Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* was a major influence on this book, and "The Director" is very much an homage. Motifs from the film appear in that poem and perhaps elsewhere throughout the collection.

Olivier Assayas' *Personal Shopper* was another essential touchstone for this book, as was his *Irma Vep* (series, 2022). "The South Node" is directly based on the former film.

Other poems here are based on found or appropriated material:

- "The Student" and "The Blue Torus" are based on a paragraph from Tom Clark's *Late Returns: A Memoir of Ted Berrigan* (Tombouctou, 1985). I've heavily altered its content and added new phrases, but much of the syntactical structure remains.
- "Alternates (I)" contains a quote from a 2019 *Vanity Fair* interview with Kristin Stewart ("There are certain actors...").
- "The Hotel Neptune" is based on a passage in a weird pulp novel I found called *Psi-Hunt* by Michael Kurland (Berkley Books, 1980). It contains a mix of verbatim quotation and

original additions and alterations. The aura of this scene informed a lot of the present collection.

- "Voice Not Her Own" is based on a separate answer Kristin Stewart gave in the same *Vanity Fair* interview. mentioned above Additions and alterations have been made.
- "The Crystal Wave" is based on a paragraph from *Count Zero* by William Gibson. It has been heavily altered, though a few key phrases remain from the original, esp. "the worn sad evidence of the century."